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ABSTRACT

This paper calls for the elimination of sex role stereotyping in classrooms and reading programs and suggests strategies for creating nonsexist learning environments. The first section defines sex role stereotpying, explains its detrimental effects, and points to evidence of its existence in classrooms and instructional materials. The second section reports the results of a survey of more than 1,300 teachers regarding their perceptions of sex role stereotyping in their classrooms. A comparison of the return responses (from 60% of those surveyed) with findings of previous studies of sex role stereotyping in classroom activities and instructional materials indicates that more sex role stereotyping may exist in learning environments than many teachers recognize. The third section of the paper outlines strategies that teachers can use to increase their awareness of sex stereotyping and to create nonsexist learning environments in a school system, a school building, or a single classroom. The final section lists books, booklets, pamphlets, and inservice and curricular materials of aid in eliminating sex stereotyping in education. (GW)

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STEREOTYPING IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

by

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STEREOTYPING IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

As reading teachers we do not hold all of our students to grade level standards in their reading performance. We don't expect that all children, by the time they reach fourth grade, will be reading on a fourth grade level. Common sense, our own observation of the children we teach, and hundreds of research efforts compel us to recognize the great diversity among children in their maturity levels, their linguistic abilities, their degree of motivation, and countless other variables which influence how well a child will read. We do not make assumptions about a child's reading ability based on his or her grade placement. As professionals we know better than to stereotype children with regard to their chronological age; why then do we continue to do so according to their sex? It behoves us to be concerned about sex-role stereotyping in our classrooms and in our reading programs. The purpose of this paper is to present a convincing argument for this fact and to suggest a course of action.

One of the generally accepted goals of education today, and the one most appropriate for a teacher of reading, is the development of each individual's potential. We strive for the full realization of the talents and abilities within each child, each person, that we teach; so that ultimately, all can function as self-actualizing and contributing members of a democratic society. Teachers of reading hold a position of central importance in this educational process. The achievement of human potential: intellectual, social, emotional, is obviously dependent on the development of the cognitive and affective domains; fostering this development is the daily task of the teacher of reading. To the extent that we limit this growth, we fail as educators. Sex-role stereotyping functions to inhibit growth cognitively and affectively, in both boys and girls, by setting unnecessary limits on individual freedom, by establishing artificial boundaries, by making a mockery of the notion of "equal educational opportunity."

stereotyping

What is a sex-role stereotype? It can be conceived of as an oversimplified, standardized, construct of what it means to be a male or a female. It is the expectation that a person will think and act in a certain manner, aspire to certain goals, and follow a predetermined "life-script" based solely on his or her gender. Perhaps the most pernicious aspect of sex-role stereotyping is that it disregards the uniqueness of each human. Professional educators would never (one hopes) consciously teach students that Blacks are lazy, Jewish people greedy, or Irish people drunkards; nor would we tolerate materials in our classrooms which projected those images. Yet, in many subtle ways, we communicate to students that boys are strong and girls weak; boys independent and girls dependent; boys active and girls passive; and we continue to use materials which reinforce these limiting, damaging roles. As there is no basis in reality for holding grade level standards for all children's reading performance, so there is no real basis for standards of male vs. female behavior. Golden and Hunter ('74)[1] summarizing their exhaustive study of the research on sex differences conclude:

> "The literature of sex differences indicates that the range of differences within one sex is larger than the differences between sexes. The perspective on sex differences suggested by the literature is that differences exist more between people than they do between opposite sexes. The research tends to support the hypothesis that there are no differences between boys and girls or men and women that merit differential treatment of one sex over another."

We can assume that this would include differential treatment in the classroom situation. When a teacher, during a directed reading activity, looks at the female students (as I recently observed in a second grade) and says, "Lets sit up straight like good little secretaries," and, turning to the males in the group, "good little businessmen", she is not differentiating between the sexes on the basis of their innate abilities but on her own limited view of what is appropriate, or inevitable, for males and females.

Documentation that sex-role stereotyping occurs with regularity in the average classroom has been well established in the past by such researchers as: Mayer and Thompson ('63), Spaudling ('63), Jackson and Lahaderne ('71), and Chananie ('72).[2] The results of these efforts were replicated most recently by the Sheridan study

('76)[3] of classrooms in a typical mid-western school system.

Likewise, the existence of stereotyping in curricular materials, particularly textbooks, has been documented by researchers such as Zinet ('72) and Weitzman and Rizzo ('75).[4] These findings were also replicated in a study completed by Sheridan ('74)[5] which analyzed materials in use by the same school system which was the subject of her '76 study. One area which has not been as well researched is that of teacher's perceptions of sex-role stereotyping in their classrooms. The research findings I am about to present deal with this crucial issue of teachers' own awareness of their classroom behavior. These findings are of special interest and significance because the population studied was the same as that used by Sheridan in both her investigations ('74-'76) but the results are dramatically different and therefore serve to emphasize the magnitude of the problem of sex-role stereotyping.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SEXISM

In the 1975-76 academic year, the Education Department at Saint Mary's College (Notre Dame, Indiana) sponsored a federally funded Institute, Project CHOICE (Creating Human Options in Children's Education) which provided training in the detection and elimination of sex discrimination in education. As director of the project, I coordinated an assessment of teacher attitudes and perceptions of sex-role stereotyping. One thousand three hundred and ninety (1,390) teachers, 100% of all the teachers within one school system, 60% of whom were female, were requested to respond to items on a questionnaire designed by Project CHOICE participants. The average return rate for the entire evaluative instrument which measured various aspects of sex discrimination was 60%; all were completed anonymously. The responses significant to our discussion today were as follows:[6]

To the question, "Do teachers have different expectations for boys and girls? e.g. grades, passivity, discipline problems?"

67% (595 individuals) of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 30% NO: 70%

27% (242 individuals) of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 47% NO: 53%

To the question: "Are classroom activities assigned on the basis of sex?"

74% (598 individuals) of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 9% NO: 91%

26% (209 individuals) of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 20% NO: 80%

To the question: "Are instructional and recreational games assigned on the basis of sex?"

70% (581 individuals) of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 21% NO: 79%

24% (197 individuals) of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 29% NO: 71%

To the question: "Do teachers use different methods of reward and punishment for boys and girls?"

60% (545 individuals) of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 23% NO: 77%

34% (303 individuals) of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 47% NO: 53%

To the question: "Do teachers describe and prescribe behavior on the basis of sex? e.g. "Why don't the girls bake cookies? "Girls don't push and shove."

58% (528 individuals) of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 27% NO: 73%

37% (334 individuals) of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 30% NO: 70%

To the question: "Is there evidence of stereotyping of sex roles in teacher attitude or in instructional materials? For example, are role models rough and manly for boys and dainty and feminine for girls?"

66% (611 individuals) of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 9% NO: 38% SOMETIMES: 44% NO OPINION: 9%

28% (260 individuals) of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 9% NO: 32% SOMETIMES: 46% NO OPINION: 13%

stereotyping

In analyzing the conclusions that can be drawn from these responses, it is obvious that female teachers exhibited far more interest in this topic on the evaluative instrument than did the male teachers. The female response was as high as 74% in one case with the average being double that of the male teachers' return rate in absolute numbers. In general, one might also infer that the majority of teachers responding do not treat students differently on the basis of their (the student's) sex at least in the areas specified by the questions. In every case, a majority of both male and female teachers indicated that students in their classrooms are accorded equal treatment. Furthermore, the majority perceive other teachers as non-discriminatory in their classroom practices also. These findings are in direct opposition to the Sheridan study ('76) which was based on the same school population and conducted within the same school year. Sheridan's findings indicate that students are treated differently according to their sex within the school system which was surveyed. In her investigation, Sheridan analyzed the assignment of classroom activities by sex as well as teacher's differential treatment of students by sex. These are the same areas assessed by the Project CHOICE study in the items previously presented. It should be noted that the two studies (Sheridan '76 and CHOICE '76), while occuring simultaneously within the same school corporation, were completely independent of one another. Several explanations for the apparent contradictions in their respective findings are possible. The Sheridan study was confined to a limited number of schools whereas the CHOICE survey represents the perceptions of teachers from every school within the system. It is conceivable that the teachers reporting discriminatory practices (consistently in the minority, as has been noted) were the very ones whose classrooms were included in the Sheridan study. However, this is highly unlikely, especially considering the fact that 74% of the teachers at the elementary level are female and the majority of the respondents were also female. More likely is the possibility of a disparity between the way teachers think

they behave in their classrooms and the way they actually do behave. Sheridan recorded the student's perceptions of how their teachers treat them, whereas the CHOICE study reports the teachers' perceptions of how they treat their students. Unfortunately, the two are not congruent. (Oh! To see ourselves as others see us!) By teachers' own admission, on the previously cited items, an average of 32% reported differentiated treatment of students within their classrooms on the basis of the student's sex. With a population as large as the one surveyed, a minority of 32% still represents roughly 300 teachers, and, therefore probably over 1,000 students who are affected by such discriminatory treatment. Although the teachers surveyed were all teaching in the same geographical area, they are probably representative of teachers everywhere in terms of their professional competance. (All of the teachers responding were certified.) The implications of these findings are indeed staggering when one considers the amount of discrimination based on students' sex which must occur every day in our nation's public schools. It was this type of discrimination which triggered passage of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX of the Amendments states:

> "No person...shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." 7

The Title IX Regulations themselves, which specify practices constituting discrimination, do not include sex-role stereotyping in teacher language or in curricular materials. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare wisely refrained from infringing on freedom of speech and of the press by excluding these important but elusive areas of discrimination. "Nothing in this Regulation shall be interpreted as requiring or prohibiting or abridging in any way the use of particular textbooks or curricular materials." (Title IX Rules and Regulations, 86.42) Whether "discrimination under any educational program" includes such

practices as assigning students classroom duties on the basis of sex or requiring students to "line up" with boys in one line, girls in another, and similar classroom practices remains to be seen if and when litigation occurs involving these issues. The Regulations do, however, specifically prohibit schools from, "Subject(ing) any person to separate or different rules of behavior, sanctions, or other treatment." (Title IX Rules and Regulations, 86.31, b #4) One can infer that individual teachers, as well as school corporations, are therefore prohibited from administering different punishments to boys and girls, an apparently common practice, based on the CHOICE survey. (47% of the male teachers responding indicated different punishments for the sexes; 23% of the female teachers.)

It is doubtful, however, that sex discrimination in teacher attitude and teacher expectation could ever be proven in a court of law. But it is in these intangible, nearly immeasurable, areas that we are most influential as teachers and therefore have the greatest potential for aiding our students in their development as full human beings or in thwarting this development. When teachers become "significant others" for children, as we often do, our professional responsibility for their growth increases. It becomes our moral obligation to act in the best interest of our students (and, in this case, clearly within the spirit if not the letter of the law) by eliminating discriminatory practices and attitudes in our classrooms - practices and attitudes which amount to sex-role stereotyping.

The item in the CHOICE survey which is of most interest to teachers of reading is the following: "Are males and females stereotyped in instructional Materials?" This question was answered by only 25% of the male teachers within the system but by 69% of the female teachers. Of the males responding, 7% said "Yes," 23% "Somtimes," 58% "No," and 12% had "No opinion." Of the female teachers responding, 11% said "Yes," 47% "Sometimes," 37% "No," and 6% had "No Opinion." In contrast to an overall return rate of 60% for the entire questionnaire, this particular item was completed by only 25% of the male teachers indicating that it enjoyed a low priority status with this group. Only 7% of the men responding, or 15

male teachers out of a total of 560 in the system, indicated that they recognize the consistent stereotyping in the material they teach with everyday. Of all the females in the corporation, only 66 individuals out of 839 are "on record" in the survey as recognizing the stereotypic nature of their instructional materials. The Sheridan ('74) study analyzed and documented sex stereotyping in the materials used in the corporation at all levels, in all subject areas, and represented the combined efforts of many individuals. (lest the suggestion be made that the Sheridan report was the work of one biased researcher; such was not the case.) Copies of this report were sent to the mayor of the community and the findings given front page coverage in a Sunday edition of the local city paper. In spite of this the teachers surveyed in the CHOICE study indicated they did not consider the materials to be stereotyped. It should be noted that 47% of the female teachers responding indicated that curricular materials are stereotyped "Sometime," and 58% of the males agreed they are "Sometimes." But the Sheridan study documents the fact that the materials these teachers are using are overwhelming sex-role stereotyped.

If teachers do not recognize stereotyped images of males and females in curricular materials, how can they be expected to identify sexism in their own classroom behavior? The response to this last item, indicating as it does a lack of insight on the part of the teachers surveyed, calls into question their objectivity and accuracy in responding to the other questions dealing with their treatment of students. Perhaps far more than 32% of the teachers pulled practice discrimination in their classrooms quite unconsciously. This cannot be construed as an indictment of teachers, however. Schools have long been recognized as microcosisms of the societies they perpetuate; teachers have been the victims of discriminatory education and socialization themselves.

<u>In response to the question on the CHOICE survey:</u>

> <u>"Have provisions been made for the staff in your building to obtain information regarding sex role stereotyping and its implications?"</u>

62% of the female teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 39% NO: 61%

31% of the male teachers surveyed responded:

YES: 37% NO: 63%

Clearly, there is a need to provide training for teachers in what constitutes sex-role stereotyping in materials and in teacher behavior. At the pre-service level, this obligation obviously falls on Schools of Education. At Saint Mary's College, students are alerted to sex-role stereotyping in their Developmental Reading courses. As part of our regular teacher-training program, we require students to evaluate available instructional materials using a variety of criteria. Evidence of sexism and/or racism is one of them. A discussion of stereotyping in books leads inevitably to a consideration of sex discrimination in the total learning environment. Another area of regular course study which lends itself to a consideration of sex discrimination in instructional programs is the development or the consideration of appropriate goals for reading programs. Objectives in the affective domain, dealing with the fostering of positive self-concepts, require a classroom atmosphere in which all students are permitted the freedom to develop as individuals; this is another fertile area for class discussion of the effect on students that stereotyped materials and teacher expectations can have.

But among in-service teachers, where does the responsibility fall for recognizing the need and taking action to meet the need for teacher workshops, seminars, "rap sessions", on the topic of sex-role stereotyping? Perhaps with those who have a vested interest in the content of reading materials. Perhaps with those who first teach a child to comprehend the printed word. Perhaps with those who are commited to the development of the whole child.

The social studies teacher might campaign for non-sexist textbooks, as some are, on the basis that the materials currently in use present an incomplete, and therefore inaccurate, account of history. But, in my opinion, the basis for the reading teacher's concern is a much more compelling motivation. The first consideration is that large

numbers of boys are not learning to read successfully with the discriminatory materials currently in use in most schools. This is common knowledge in the profession. Secondly, those students who are successful in reading (primarily girls, also common knowledge) are being exposed to extremely negative images of females, when females are portrayed in materials at all.

Obviously, the prevelance of reading disabilities among boys involves many and complex casual factors. But removing any and all contributions to the problem should be a priority of reading teachers. Zimet ('75)[8] found that the content of traditional instructional materials presents models of behavior, specifically dependency, which are rejected by boys; and excludes types of behavior, aggression themes, which are important to boys. "Aggression is a sex-typed behavior and one that plays a potent role in both the fantasies and real life of the young boy." She concludes that:

> "...models of rewarded dependent behavior in the texts are discrepent with society's expectations of men and boys. In order to avoid social disapproval, behavior that deviates markedly from sex-role standards is likely to be inhibited and situations which bring it forth are likely to be rejected. In this case, it is possible that such models create anxiety in the boy and set up an aversive response to the reading content and subsequently to the act of reading as well. Learning and achieving requires a form of aggressiveness which is also missing from the text. Both boys and girls could benefit from the inclusion of both aggression and dependence themes in texts."

The second consideration is the negative images of males and females that children are exposed to in many texts. As Weitzman and Rizzo ('75) point out:

> "After studying these textbooks (books commonly in use throughout the U.S.) one cannot help but conclude that children are being warped by the latent messages in them. Only teachers can change the impact that these books will have on our young people."

That teachers should do everything possible to compensate for these "latent messages" and to eliminate the use of such books altogether is eloquently attested to by Frazier and Sadker in their listing of research findings (culled from a variety of sources) attesting to "the growth that has been stunted and the promise that has been denied."[9]

"Loss of academic potential:

1. Intellectually, girls start off ahead of boys. They begin speaking, reading, and counting sooner; in the early grades they are even better in math. However, during the high school years, a different pattern emerges and girls' performance on ability tests begins to decline. Indeed, male students exhibit significantly more IQ gain from adolescence to adulthood than do their female counterparts.

2. Although women make much better high school grades than do men, they are less likely to believe that they have the ability to do college work.

3. Of the brightest high school graduates who do not go to college, 75-90% are women.

4. In 1900, women earned 6% of all doctoral degrees, in 1920, 15%, by 1970, only 13%. In short, the percentage of doctorates earned by women has actually decreased since the 1920's.

Loss of self-esteem:

1. As boys and girls progress through school, their opinions of boys grow increasingly more positive and their opinions of girls increasingly more negative. Both sexes are learning that boys are worth more.

2. Fewer high school women than men rates themselves above average on leadership, popularity in general, popularity with the opposite sex, and intellectual as well as social self-confidence.

3. On the Bernreuter personality inventory, norms show that women are more neurotic and less self-sufficient, more introverted and less dominant than men.

4. College women believe that men desire a women who is extremely passive and who places wifely and familial duties above her own personal and professional development.

5. College women respond negatively to women who have achieved high academic or vocational success, and at times display an actual desire to avoid success.

6. Fifty-five percent of a group of women at Stanford and forty percent at Berkley agreed with the following sentence: 'There is a time when I wish I had been born a member of the opposite sex.' Only one in seven male students would endorse such a statement.

Loss of occupational potential:

1. By the time they are in the fourth grade, girls' visions of occupations open to them are limited to four: teacher, secretary, nurse or mother.

2. By the ninth grade 25% of boys and only 3% of girls are considering careers in science or engineering.

3. Decline in career commitment has been found in girls of high school age. This decline was related to their feelings that male classmates disapproved of woman's using her intelligence."

The effects of these socializing patterns are evident in later years in terms of dollars and sense:

1. Female college graduates median annual income peaks at slightly more than $10,000 at age 60, while that of males does do at approximately $19,000 at age 50. 10

2. The maximum medium income of male high school graduates is greater than the maximum medium income of females with 4 or more years of college. 10

3. Female high school graduates median annual income peaks at approximately $6,000 at age 60, while that of males peaks at approximately $11,000 at age 50. 10

4. Fully employed women high school graduates earn less money than fully employed men who have not completed grade school. 11

5. In 1920, 44.1% of professional and technical workers were women; in 1940, 41.5%; in 1972, 39.3%. 11

6. In 1972, 43.9% of all American women worked, as did 42.9% of women with children under 18 years of age. 11

7. The average woman who was 18 in '74 will work 25years even if she marries; 45 years if she remains single. 12

8. Women make up a very small percent of many important professions: 9% of all scientists; 7% of all physicians; 3% of all lawyers. 11

9. The percentage of women in the teaching profession is decreasing. In 1920, 26% of all American teachers were women; in 1970, 22%. 11

10. One out of 9 White families is headed by a woman. One out of three "minority-group" families is headed by a woman. 11

As this brief listing indicates, the aim of the public schools in a democracy "equal education opportunity for all" and the goal of the educational process itself, "the full development of human potential" have been empty promises for a majority of students. Schools have participated in the socialization of females as second class citizens. To be sure, males suffer by the same socialization process, if not economically, certainly physically -witness the high incidence among males of heart disease, ulcers, their mortality rate - and psychologically, through pressures to be "success objects." However, both sexes agree the male role us the more desirable.

The elimination of sexist materials and discriminatory teacher behavior in the classroom would be a significant step in altering the existing socialization process

in our schools. It is astounding to learn (as I have of late) that efforts being made to promote the adoption of non-discriminatory materials are being thwarted by reading teachers themselves on the basis that skill development is our primary concern - not issued related to the "women's movement." This attitude reminds one of the exasperating subject specialist who insists, "I teach my content; I shouldn't have to be concerned with students' reading skills!" They seem to be saying "As reading teachers we teach skills; we shouldn't have to be concerned with content!" Who should know better than reading teachers that content and process (skills) should not be separated? That one does not have to be sacrificed to the other in an instructional program? As a reading specialist, I too am interested in the best possible material for the development of reading skills; but I'm also interested in material that will help all my students develop positive self-concepts (the two are not unrelated) and that will help my students establish sound values. I'm interested in the affective objectives of my reading program as well as the cognitive. I wouldn't teach reading with pornographic material, no matter how good the "skills program" was, nor how motivated the student might be to read such material. Materials which are sexist or racist are equally obscene. I don't want to have to teach with either.

Publishers are responding to the need for non-discriminatory material which has been made known by a vocal minority. But it will be many years before these materials find their way into the nation's classroom. (Darwin is still not permitted in some Biology classes!) Thousands of students will continue to be influenced by the traditional texts, particularly in those states where textbook adoptions are not mandated by law. Even in those areas where new adoptions are required, non-sexist texts will be challenged by some groups on political or religious grounds. Teachers at the grass roots level need to be alerted to the dangers inherent in stereotyped materials. Once a teacher becomes concerned with

sex discrimination in materials, hopefully there will be a carry over to classroom practices. Instructional materials are the place to begin eliminating sex discrimination in education because they are a concrete manifestation of its existence and becuase their effects are so devastating.

The logical and best equipped members of the teaching profession to lead the campaign for non-dsicriminatory texts are teachers of reading. Many are doing so already, but many more must join with us. We can look to the law for the elimination of discrimination in the areas of employment, counseling, athletics, vocational education, physical education, but we must look to ourselves for the elimination of sexism in our classrooms.

Sexism in the Learning Environment:
Strategies for Change

The question becomes: Where to begin? The same organisational skills and technical know-how one utilizes in administering a reading program can be applied to the creation of a non-sexist learning environment: in a school corporation, a school building, or in a single classroom. If several teachers can form an "interest group" much can be accomplished. However, even one individual can make a difference.

At the institutional level, by now, every school system receiving Federal aid (directly or indirectly) should have a Title IX coordinator appointed. A self-assessment of sex-discrimination should have been performed during the last school year ('75-'76) on a system wide basis as is required by the Regulations. Find out who the Title IX Coordinator is in your system. Contact that person; ask to see a copy of the assessment. The Regulations also require that the self-evaluation remain on file, subject to HEW inspection, for a period of 3 years ('77-'79) along with a written statement detailing remedial measures undertaken to bring the corporation in line with the requirements of the Regulations. If no assessment has

been done, inform your corporation that they are in violation of the law. Some school administrators are so harried by the demands of government related paper work that the required assessment may have simply gone unnoticed. In large systems, however, where several lawyers are retained on a permanent basis, such an "oversight" is highly unlikely since the lawyers are paid to keep school officials informed of their obligations. If the lack of a self-assessment was a genuine oversight, offer to help the Title IX coordinator with his or her task of completing one. A committee of teachers, administrators and parents is probably the most effective approach to conducting a self-evaluation. Excellent assistance may be obtained from this publication:

> Complying with Title IX: Implementing Institutional Self-Evaluation. Martha Matthews and Shirley McCune, Resource Center for Sex Roles in Education 1210 16th St. N. W., Washington, D.C. 20036 ($3.00 each)

If the assessment was completed, but is not available for teachers and parents to examine, you could press the issue at a PTA meeting or a meeting of the school board.

In-service training might be another undertaking of the Title IX coordinator. You might inquire if he or she has plans to run any meetings informing teachers of their responsibilities under the new Regulations and on the general question of discriminatory classroom practices. Should the coordinator respond by saying that teachers are not covered by the Regulations, you could mention the provisions prohibiting different punishment for boys and girls, different dress codes, etc. Teachers are involved with these issues every day. Get a copy of the Title IX Rules and Regulations yourself (available from HEW, free of cost) to mentally evaluate your corporation's degree of compliance and to become informed. If you do observe violations of the Regulations you may want to file a grievance. A grievance procedure for such violations is also mandated by Title IX. Many school systems, however, have definite filing deadlines written into their procedures; partly to expedite matters, and partly to eliminate cases on "technicalities."

Be sure you know your system's requirements so as to comply with them.

Teacher associations should also be contacted. Contractual agreements in the future between teacher's unions and school corporations will likely be influenced by provisions in the Regulations. Are the individuals who represent you aware of these ramifications? In larger cities, where teacher negotiations are conducted by "professionals" the problem is not so serious as in smaller towns where the negotiators for teachers are likely to be teachers themselves. In these cases, it has been my experience that school administrators are likely to be better informed about new Federal Regulations than are teachers.

With the cooperation of the Title IX coordinator, or acting alone , a concerned teacher can take steps to identify other individuals who are interested in the creation of equal educational opportunities. The "grape-vine" can be an excellent source of information. Try to find out if any persons in authority (principals, coordinators) are known to be involved with the issues of sex/race discrimination. In some area, the individuals who have long been fighting for the rights of minority groups (Blacks, Chicanos) are suspicious of new comers to the human rights scene, especially when the new comers are seeking rights for the majority-women. Opponents of civil rights love to see these types of divisions develop. Work to prevent such a situation. Seek out those people who are recognised leaders in the cause of non-discriminatory education. Find out if local colleges or universities have faculty members who run seminars, teach courses, or lecture on sexism/racism. They may be very interested in cooperating with other educators on these problems. Many have children in the public schools themselves. Find out if any of your colleagues are serving on political or community committees associated with human rights. Professional organizations of all types, your local chapter of the International Reading Association, The National Association for the Education of Young Children, Pi Lamda Theta, etc. would also be good sources of people interested and willing to lend their expertise.

If the Title IX coordinator is enthusiastic, together you could assemble all the

people you've identified for a planning session at which time a course of action could be mapped out. The agenda would reflect the specific needs of your school corporation and/or the make up of the group. If teachers predominate, perhaps your first priority would be to strategize on how to alert other teachers to sex/race discrimination in their own attitudes and/or in their materials. If the group is composed primarily of parents, the strategy might consist of how best to influence the school administration to act on these issues. Similar groups across the nation have achieved remarkable results. The bibliography lists some items available from these established sources.

A logical way for the group to proceed, as has already been suggested, is to use the same basic procedure as is used in the establishment of a reading program. Begin with a specific goal to work toward, i.e. the elimination of all forms of sex/race discrimination in the _____School Corporation. Conduct an assessment (consult the school's self-evaluation) to determine areas of need. Establish priorities. Identify objectives which, when achieved, will represent progress toward your goal. Identify a time frame for the achievement of each objective. Take into account people's motivation (parent's, teachers', administrators', counselors', students'), consider the materials you will need, (for public relations purposes, for in-service teacher training), identify support agencies which might be contacted and corrective procedures to be used in the event the first plan fails to achieve the desired results.

If a self-appointed committee approach is not manageable in your situation, there are still steps a concerned teacher can take alone. When you are asked to contribute topics for in-service work-shops in your school district, lobby for training in such areas as "the development of positive self-concepts in all students," or, "the development of values through the reading program." Be ready to suggest the name of a presentor who is qualified in these areas and who also happens to be a feminist. Your faculty will get a healthy does of sex-role stereotyping as part

of the package.

You can assess your own classroom materials for sex and race discrimination. Publishing companies have available now guidelines for the elimination of sexism in textbooks: Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes prepared by McGraw Hill Book Company is one and Guidelines for Improving the Image of Women in Textbooks availabel from Scott, Foresman and Company is another, Write to these companies for copies and share them with other teachers, with the school principal. Other check-lists for the evaluation of curricular materials are also available. (From Publishers, and the bibliography lists additional sources.) Possibly you could offer to prepare a presentation for a faculty meeting of the sex-role typing you have "discovered" in the materials you are using and the methods you've devised for counteracting its effect. You could offer to give this same presentation at PTA meetings, for church clubs, women's clubs, and for anyone else who will listen to you. As a reading teacher, you have a natural interest in the content of the books you are teaching children to read, and of the books you are using to teach the reading skills. Your expertise in this area will be accepted and respected; your genuine concern (hopefully) will be infectious. Evaluate you own classroom practices. Do you unconsciously reinforce sexism? When the boys refuse to play with the girls, do you condone their behavior? Would you allow, the White children in your class to refuse to play with the Black? (One occasionally hears the argument that antagonism between boys and girls is "natural" at a certain age. How can "natural behavior" be differentiated from "socialized behavior when all children are subject to sex stereotyping from birth?) Are you more likely to compliment your female students on their appearance, the males on their accomplishments? Do you use such phrases as: "ladies don't sit like that," or "big boys don't cry." Do you expect your female students to have difficulty with math and science, your males with reading? Do you convey these expectations to the students? Do you assume that all your female students will grow up to be mothers, your males wage-earners? Are you concerned with "sissy" behavior on the part of a

boy student but not with girls who are "tomboys"? Do you use sex as a criterion for grouping, "boys one one side, girls on the other?" Would you give such directions as: "tall students here, short ones there"; or, "strong students here, physically weak there." What is the difference? When books you read with children, or the instructional materials you teach with are stereotyped, do you attempt to compensate through discussion, calling attention to the false images that are projected? Do you bring in supplementary material to counteract these stereotypes? Are guest speakers who are good role-models invited to your classroom?

For a period of a month, notice how often you treat children differentially on the basis of their sex. Share your findings with your colleagues.

Examine the every day situations at your school. Are the cheerleaders practicing in a corridor while the male backetball team monopolizes the court day after day? (This would be a clear violation of Title IX). Are there areas in the school library designated "For Boys" and others "For Girls?" Who was the official arbiter of what each sex prefers? Does the library contain books about strong, brave, courageous and adventurous women? If not, you may want to request that some be ordered. If there is a trophy case in the school building does it contain trophies won by all male teams with no winning female teams represented? Are there competitions available to female athletes whereby they can win trophies ? At the annual athletic awards banquet, are two to three times as many male students given recognition as females? Does the school have a plaque prominently displayed honoring the school safety patrol? Are there twice as many boy's names as girls? Is there a reason for this? Initiate discussion among your faculty on these and other questionable practices you observe?

If you do attempt to establish a non-sexist learning environment in your classroom or if you take action to effect change on a system-wide basis, parents may question the wisdom of altering the socialization process. In some localities the changes mandated by Title IX are meeting with this type of opposition. When parents realize that the purpose of eliminating sexism is not to eliminate the differences between the sexes much of their fear will be allayed. Parents must be educated to the fact that in a truly non-sexist atmosphere, the differences among all children become more distinct because none are being programmed to follow a behavior pattern based on a stereotype. Mothers who themselves lack the necessary skills to be self-supporting are often the first to recognize the need for changes in their daughter's education. Fathers who are encouraging their daughters to pursue professional careers need to be shown the relationship between a positive self-concept in their daughters and a non-dsicriminatory learning environment. Parents of both sexes need to be confronted with the psychological and physical effects on males that are the result of a socialization process which stresses frenetic activity and fierce competition among boys. A series of PTA meetings focusing on such topics related to the creation of a non-sexist learning environment might prove beneficial to both parents and educators.

Although schools should make every effort to keep parents informed and to enlist their cooperation, there may be those parents who would want the schools to continue promoting the traditional sex-role stereotypes. Occassionally school administrators complain that they must buckle under such pressure. One wonders if these same school administrators who are willing to tolerate sexist classroom practices because of community pressure would be as willing to condone racist practices in the same classrooms. In this country bigoted parents are not permitted to insist that minority children be treated in a discriminatory manner in the schools their children attend. Prejudice based on sex is no different than prejudice based on race. The administrator's and the teacher's strongest defense of non-sexist or non-racist education is

that it is the only type of education consistent with the democratic ideals on which this nation was founded. Religious and ethnic diversity are to be respected in the public school classroom, to be sure, but cultural traditions must give way when they contradict the law of the land or when they are an obstacle to the achievement of equal educational opportunity for all students.

There is one final problem worthy of mention. And that is the risk involved when one takes a stand against sexism. The male teacher who champions the elimination of sex discrimination in education is considered a "liberated man." The female who does the same is considered a "women's libber." One is a compliment. The other is not. Some people will assume that you must have had a dreadfully unhappy childhood, the victim of an oppressive father; or that your marriage is unsatisfactory; or that you are frustrated in your career. You will be called a "trouble maker," "aggressive," and "political." Coping with these and other allegations can be draining at times. The idea that an intelligent, well educated, well adjusted and happy female could take all this "women's lib" stuff seriously is beyond the realm of possibility for many people. Their reactions may range from sympathy (poor dear!) to amusement (isn't she cute!) to outright hostility. The advice given to me recently by a colleague and a friend (male) seems to be the most appropriate course of action: Don't worry so much about what people will think of you - do what you know is right!

Obviously, in this space, one cannot include the entire spectrum of issues to be considered nor all the practices to be changed. As teachers of reading, no one needs to sell us on the value of reading to learn, to grow, to achieve. Hopefully, the attached bibliography will open doors - or give you the strength to force open the doors. The struggle is worth the victory for the prize is nothing less than the freeing of the human spirit.

TEACHER RESOURCES FOR THE ELIMINATION OF STEREOTYPING IN EDUCATION

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WESTSIDE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, P.O. BOX 24D20, Village Station, Los Angeles, California 90024

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